

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 376

By Davidson

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Paul W. Johnson for meritorious service to his country during the Vietnam War.

WHEREAS, our country was conceived by individuals willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure this nation's freedom; and

WHEREAS, the Volunteer State is especially proud to have so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Tennesseans have continued this time-honored tradition of volunteerism through service in the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, Paul Johnson has served with courage and gallantry during the war in Vietnam, and deserves proper recognition for heroism both in the United States Army and in society today; and

WHEREAS, Paul Johnson was working on the family farm in the Ashburn community of Robertson County when he received his draft notice. Ten days later he reported for basic training at Fort Gordon, Georgia and was then assigned to Fort Benning, Georgia for advanced training; and

WHEREAS, following his initial service, he re-enlisted and was stationed in Germany, where he met and married his wife, Brigitte, and

WHEREAS, in 1967, Paul, Brigitte and son, Timo, returned to the United States. A year later, Paul was assigned to Vietnam where he served as a Platoon Sergeant in Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry, of the 9th Infantry Division in support of a marine division; and

WHEREAS, the morning of April 9, 1969 began as usual with assessment of casualties, finding time to eat, performing maintenance on the unit vehicles and writing letters home; and

WHEREAS, at about 3:00 p.m., a firefight began with a large North Vietnamese Army force. Large amounts of ammunition were expended and Staff Sergeant Johnson's company commander ordered him to a nearby marine ammunition storage pad for more ammunition; and

WHEREAS, as Sergeant Johnson neared the pad in his armored personnel carrier, he saw a U. S. military helicopter taking heavy enemy fire; and

WHEREAS, the helicopter crashed into the ammunition pad, detonating the contents, and driving 90 marines into a nearby bunker for cover; and

WHEREAS, although Sergeant Johnson and his driver were able to get out of range of the exploding ordnance, they were approached by a marine colonel who explained that 90 marines were trapped in the burning bunker who needed rescue; and

WHEREAS, the marine colonel could not give Sergeant Johnson an order to attempt a rescue in an area where unprotected personnel would certainly be killed by exploding ammunition, concussion and shrapnel; nevertheless, Sergeant Johnson, with the concurrence of his driver, made four trips in the APC, ferrying out the more severely burned marines first, but eventually saving all; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Johnson received burns to his hand from yanking open the burning door to the bunker, and the lights and antenna were blown off his vehicle; and

WHEREAS, for his heroism, Sergeant Johnson was awarded the Soldier's Medal, a decoration which later entitled him to increased retirement pay; and

WHEREAS, following his tour in Vietnam, Paul Johnson returned to the United States, down from his original 235-pound weight to 170 pounds. His wife did not recognize him at first

and many of his countrymen seemingly were not appreciative of the service of Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, Paul Johnson remained in the Army until 1985, when he retired at Fort Knox as a Master Sergeant after a 23-year career. He is now an employee of the Robertson County Highway Department and is considering a future run for the Robertson County Commission; and

WHEREAS, Paul Johnson served with great bravery and ability; unfortunately, he and his fellow Vietnam veterans did not receive the initial appreciation from their fellow Americans that was their due; and

WHEREAS, Paul Johnson performed his duties with the utmost skill, dedication and professionalism; his service can only be categorized as outstanding and his bravery unchallenged; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and commend Paul W. Johnson from Springfield, Robertson County, Tennessee, for his meritorious service in the United States Army and bravery in the face of mortal danger. We offer our thanks for his courageous actions in defense of our liberty and way of life.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.